

2001/02

28 December - 1 January

BUDAPEST

JUL 20 2001

August - September 2001 Bimonthly 3.50 FF 4



YOUNG ADULT MEETING 2001/2002 IN BUDAPEST

## Bridge-Builders

"Can we, too, welcome young people?"

This question was asked on the very first

days of the preparation for the meeting in Budapest. Some people have already decided to join those who, at the end of December, will open their doors and try with many others to discover what it means to live out the Gospel.

The Hungarians are celebrating a thousand years of Christianity in their country. In addition to the public manifestations, the meeting will be a wonderful opportunity for them to welcome in simplicity and to reflect on the paths to take now, in a rapidly changing society. The experience of the last meeting in Budapest ten years ago is still very present in people's minds, and this will make it easier to prepare a welcome this year in the 300 parishes of the region.

The city is large and diverse. On one side of the Danube it is built on many hills, each of which defines a neighborhood. On the other side of the Danube the great Hungarian plain begins; the districts of the capital are organized in concentric semicircles, with large nineteenth-century buildings at the center, and newer suburban districts that extend far outward.

In this metropolitan area of almost three million inhabitants, the divisions among Christians contribute to the diversity: everywhere you can find Catho-

lic, Reformed and Lutheran churches, and there are also other smaller denominations, too. In this context, the meeting will be a support for those looking for reconciliation.

### Creators of Reconciliation

When you get to know Budapest better, you discover that in the city there are many creators of reconciliation. Every month, for example, one of the youth ministers, Peter, brings together thirty delegates who have received the name "bridge-builders." These young people, committed in movements or in parishes, take the time to listen to one another, to share news; they learn to work together and to use their gifts in common. Many of these young people have felt the need to propose new initiatives, to go towards those who have not had any contact with a living church. It

takes courage for them to go against the stream, in a student world where the race for the best studies and the best jobs dominates. In their ability to live differently, they are undoubtedly following in the footsteps of so many Christians who remained faithful during that earlier time when they were intimidated and even persecuted.

Because of their need to support one another, young Christians are in the habit of traveling long distances to meet. Twice a year, several thousand young people meet in Nagymaros, on the Danube fifty kilometers north of Budapest, for days of prayer and reflection. Thirty years ago, the local parish began to prepare these meetings, and they were astonished to see people come from throughout the country. The political authorities allowed the meetings to go on, although they kept a close eye on them. This year, during that meeting, three themes were offered: "God, the supreme value in my life"; "My life, a gift of God that gives value



to my being"; "God enables us to be present in society and in the world." Many of those who chose the third theme insisted on the necessity of seeing what is positive in the changes taking place in society, even if the rapid pace sometimes makes this difficult.

Also because of this need to support one another, young people regularly visit the Hungarian communities who live outside the borders of the country.

In May, the first information meetings were held in Budapest about the "pilgrimage of trust on earth." More than 200 young people began to reflect on how to prepare for this pilgrimage. A group was formed to record the songs on a CD and in this way to support the groups in the parishes. For more than ten years now, a prayer with songs from Taizé has been offered daily in the center of town. The prayer will be one of the pivots of the preparation in the autumn. Intense preparations will begin in September, inspired by the hope of finding enough places so that all can stay in families. The echoes from those who offered hospitality ten years ago are so good that this challenge seems almost able to become a reality. Part of the preparation will involve finding, in different districts of the city, many witnesses to hope who will be able to share their commitment during the meeting.

## Some Themes for Reflection for the Preparation

The "pilgrimage of trust" will be prepared in every city and region of Europe. In addition, as in past years, young people will come to Budapest from other continents. To ensure that

*The church in the city centre where a daily prayer will be held in the autumn.*

*Prayer of preparation in a parish, with blind children.*



these five days of meeting will be as intense as possible, preparing oneself does not only mean getting practical information and organizing the journey as best as one can, but also reflecting on questions such as the following:

- What experiences of crossing borders have I had; what discoveries have I already made through this? What divisions around me are obstacles to trust and how can I go beyond them?
- What makes us feel attacked and upset in daily life? How can I begin to create peace within myself? How can I bring it to others?
- How do I live a simple life? How does that simplicity make me more available to others?
- What responsibilities can I take on for a group, a team, in my local community?
- In a daily routine full of distractions, what nourishes an inner life? How can I create the necessary space for this? What can help me in this?
- When I give my time, my energies, my abilities for others, what do I get back? How does the experience transform me?

## Practical Details

Arrival: Friday morning, 28th December 2001 between 7am and 12 noon.

Departure: Tuesday afternoon (after 4 pm), 1st January 2002

Accommodation: either with families or in school and church halls. It is essential to bring a camping mat, sleeping-bag and warm clothes.

General programme for 17-29 year olds: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city and surrounding region. Morning prayer each day will be in one of the churches of the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other partici-

pants and with local people. Each day — midday and evening — there will be two common prayers for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes. There is also the possibility of spending the five days of the meeting in silence (separate accommodation).

Helpers/Choir (option open only to young adults between the ages of 17 and 29): Those who would like to help, as group-leaders in parishes or team-leaders for practical tasks, or in the choir group, should, if possible, arrive on Wednesday 26th December, between 8am and 3pm (arrival not possible on 27th December). Some of these teams will also be open to participants who arrive on 28th December.

16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by an adult over 20, with each adult accompanying no more than six 16 year olds. Arrival: 28th December — not before.

Adults over 30: the European Meeting is intended for young adults under 30, however a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading groups of young adults. We ask older adults (over 45) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, arriving on 28th Dec. (not before). If you cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and need a «real bed» please indicate this when you register.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange this.

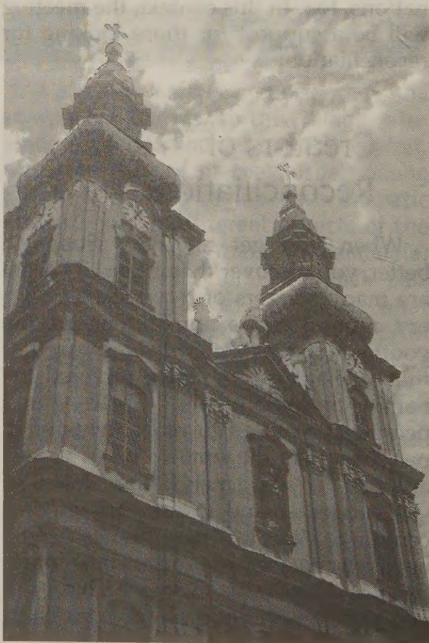
Contribution to costs The level of contribution for young people from Ireland and Britain will be approx. €55 (£35 - £40) for the whole meeting (the exact amount will be known in Oct./Nov.). As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass.

Travel: From London, coaches depart 7:15 am, 27th December; Cost: £120 return (£100 if booked and paid by 31st October); Contact: "Skyliners", Flaval House, Caldwell Road, NUNEATON, CV11 4NB. Tel: (02476) 325682 / 328410; Freephone: (0500) 481111; Fax: (02476) 354626; email: [taizebookings@skyliners.co.uk](mailto:taizebookings@skyliners.co.uk)

From other countries: Contact Taizé in the summer/autumn to learn of groups being arranged by air and by coach.

Register by 1st December. For information and to register:

Budapest Meeting  
Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé France  
Tel: (+33) 385.50.30.02  
Fax: (+33) 385.50.30.16  
E-mail: [meetings@taize.fr](mailto:meetings@taize.fr)  
<http://www.taize.fr>





# The Challenge is to Stay Together

Someone active in pastoral work in Budapest, Blanckenstein Miklos, explains his hopes for the meeting in his city.



*How did you get to know to Taizé?*

I heard about Taizé for the first time from the parish priest of Matyas in 1967. At that time in Hungary religious communities couldn't exist, and to know that in France there was a community which was looking for new ways impressed me very much. I was then able to go to Taizé, and then there was the meeting we organized in Pécs in 1989. I went to Pécs with 120 young people. It was an important step for us also because we edited a Christian magazine, Igen, for the first time. We knew that these were historical moments.

It's an old friendship. For us Hungarians, before 1989, what was going on in Taizé summarised the Western world. Many things happened underground in Hungary. Knowing that people were thinking about us and supporting us gave us lots of courage and strength. At this time Taizé was important for us mainly because of its existence, because of the people, the brothers who visited us, who listened to us.

*What do you think about the changes of the last ten years?*

The political changes didn't bring a change in Christians automatically. The political changes didn't change the commitment of Christians. During the last ten years we worked with great enthusi-

asm to rebuild the structures and the institutions of the Church. We have many Christian schools and even a university. The structure is there, but at the same time we have to ask ourselves whether these new institutions are really serving the renewal of the church. One serious problem is that those priests who previously were available for the people now have practically no time for personal contacts with the young people because of their practical duties; they are tired out. There is a double movement: the popular church is dying out but new forms of community are very strong; there are lots of islands of life in the country. From my point of view, this is a positive sign. What is important that these communities should not live apart from the parishes but support them with their presence.

*What are the challenges for the Christians in this new situation?*

To stay together. Just as during the communist period, the new challenge in the new situation is to stay together and live the Kingdom of God. From a certain point of view I don't see a big difference between the situation during communism and the current situation. Before we had to stay together against a dictatorship and now we have to stay together in a secularised society. But of

course in our present situation we have lot of possibilities. We have to learn how to use them, to use them as instruments to reach our goals. We should not get our priorities mixed up. What is essential to our faith and what is not? What is our goal and what is only an instrument?

*What do you hope for from the meeting?*

I think the meeting will reach its goal by its simple existence: to be together with God and to share it with others. We don't have to look for successes or results, even though we know there will be fruits. I think it's very good to be together. The Eastern European countries would like to join the European community without each other; they don't pay attention to each other. As if we were in competition. We also have the feeling that we have had a little bit enough of each other, since we were always forced to do everything together. This meeting could be a good opportunity to discover that we should not always look towards the West because Europe exists among ourselves too. We should start a dialogue with one another.

*How do you see the contact with young people?*

What is essential is to have people who want to transmit something to them and who have something to transmit. Many Christians kept their faith in the hard times, even at the cost of persecution and prison. The past presented in a heroic way is only a museum. But if the young people see that those who lived in the past are still joyful and their life is an example, then what they transmit is more than a history book. Their life-story becomes something concrete and understandable for the young.

*How can Budapest be a bridge between East and West?*

We can say that Hungary is a bridge only if the Hungarians accept that role. Because of our history and our language we feel a bit alone. Often we feel more as a bastion of the West in the Carpathian basin. Very often throughout our history we were attacked from the East and instead of being a bridge we were obliged to defend the West from the Eastern attacks. We need to change our outlook and to understand

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What is a sacrifice?

How do we express that we belong to God? In biblical times, the answer would have been: by offering *sacrifices*. Since this language has become almost incomprehensible for us, it is important to look for its true meaning and so to avoid misunderstandings and discussions that lead nowhere.

Today, the expression "to make a sacrifice" has a moralistic and negative connotation. It has come to mean "to do something, out of a sense of duty, that we would rather not do." In the ancient world, though, a sacrifice was an offering, a present given to the deity. At harvest time, for example, farmers presented to the Lord the first fruits as a sign of thanksgiving (Deut 26,1-11). At other times, such gifts were given to ask for forgiveness or, after an interruption in a person's life in society, to mark their reintegration into normal life. In general, to express the wish to give a present to the invisible God, the offering was brought to a holy place and entrusted to a priest, who would often burn it. This expressed the fact that the object in question, penetrated and transformed by the fire of holiness, entered into the realm of the divine; the smoke that rose up to heaven reinforced this symbolism. There were other reasons for offering sacrifices and other ways of doing it but, in essence, it was always a gift given to God. In Israel, this was something joyful, not sad (see Psalm 66,13-15). When we give a present to someone who is particularly dear to us, we count neither the cost nor the inconvenience; we think about the pleasure that person will receive. In the same way, for God's people, offering sacrifices was a way of expressing and reinforcing their belonging to the Lord who called them to live in a covenant with him.

It is true that the Bible also contains a criticism of sacrifices, generally coming from the prophets: "I desire faithful love, not sacrifices" (Hosea 6,6; cf. Amos 4,4-5; Isaiah 1,11-17; Psalm 51,16-17). This criticism, however, was not directed against sacrifices in themselves but against a hypocritical or magical attitude that put the accent on merely fulfilling an outward rite. For in the final analysis the practice was symbolic, since God has no real need of material objects. At best, then, ritual sacrifices expressed a thirst for communion, the desire to share one's life with God and indirectly with others.

For Christians, Jesus expressed fully and concretely what ritual sacrifices could only sketch out. His entire existence was a gift to others in order to put into practice the loving will of his Father. And this life "for God" and "for others" was recapitulated in his consenting to a painful death out of love. Jesus' sacrifice was thus not a liturgical rite but the gift of his life to the end (John 13,1): "He accomplished it once and for all by offering himself" (Hebrews 7,27). What makes Jesus' death sacrificial is not, contrary to what many people think, the violence of his executioners, but rather his free consent to give himself so as to accomplish God's intentions—to communicate the fullness of life. "And so I said: Here I am, I am coming to do your will!" (see Hebrews 10,1-10).

How can we make our lives a sacrifice?

In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul encourages believers to "offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12,1). In the steps of Christ, we are called to make our day-to-day existence in this world (that is the meaning here of the word "body") an offering to God that expresses a communion. What does this mean?

It is significant that the apostle does not begin by giving a list of rules to follow. He simply says: do not follow the fashions and the values of the society around you, but try and discern at all times what God wants, what is good (Romans 12,2). He knows we cannot give our lives unless we are free, unless we choose the way of love deliberately. Far from being a prison that constrains us, this way calls upon our creativity so we can discover how to be there for others in every particular situation.

In fact, in the rest of chapter 12, Paul speaks above all about the life of the Christian community, where different gifts are brought together in one body. We live for God when we understand that "we are members of one another" (12,5) and when we express all the consequences of this. Then, Paul mentions our relationship with those who are hostile to us and there, the golden rule is not to return evil for evil (12,17; cf. Matt 5,44-48). The gift of our lives to God thus takes concrete shape above all in our relationship with other human beings.

The Letter to the Hebrews gives a similar reply to the same question. "Let us constantly offer to God a *sacrifice* of praise, in other words the fruit of lips that confess his name. Keep doing good works and sharing your resources, for those kinds of *sacrifices* are pleasing to God" (Hebrews 13,15-16). Christian sacrifice is summed up here in prayer and sharing, two basic expressions of communion.

Christian sacrifice is thus at the opposite extreme from a negative, moralistic vision of the world that exalts suffering, as if the more unpleasant something was, the more acceptable to God it would be. Sacrifice is not a depressing duty that goes against the spontaneous impulse of our hearts. On the contrary, it is thanksgiving to the Lord for all the good gifts he lavishes on us. It is characterized by joy, the joy of praise and the joy of sharing with others what we ourselves have received. "God loves a joyful giver," writes Saint Paul, "and he is able to fill you with all kinds of gifts, so that you will have all you need and still have enough left over to do good works of all sorts" (2 Cor 9,7-8). Making our lives a sacrifice means giving what we have, trusting that our heavenly Father knows what we need (cf. Matt 6,32) and so we do not need to store up treasures on earth. It means discovering that we are free to live in the gladness of each new day.



# SEPTEMBER

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé.  
 The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

**2 SUN** Lk 14:1-14  
 Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

**3 Mon** Ps 84  
 Happy are those who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

**4 Tue** Mk 1:21-28  
 Jesus taught in the synagogue. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he spoke with authority.

**5 Wed** Rm 10:11-13  
 Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

**6 Thu** 1 Jn 4:16-21  
 God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

**7 Fri** 2 Co 8:7-15  
 Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

**8 Sat** Mt 1:18-23  
 The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

**1 Sat** Rv 2:8-11  
 The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

**9 SUN** Lk 14:27-33  
 Jesus said: Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

**10 Mon** Ps 105:1-5  
 Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.

**11 Tue** Ps 23  
 You guide me, Lord, on paths of righteousness. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

**12 Wed** Rm 12:14-18, 21  
 Do not repay evil with evil. Seek to do what is regarded as good by all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

**13 Thu** Ph 2:1-11  
 St. Paul writes: Be of the same mind, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus himself.

**14 Fri** 1 S 3:1-18  
 Eli told the child Samuel: If you are called again, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

**15 Sat** Mt 11:25-27  
 Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.

**16 SUN** Lk 15:1-32  
 Jesus said: There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.

**17 Mon** Jr 14:8-9  
 You are our hope, O God. You are among us and we are called by your name.

**18 Tue** Jn 14:19-23  
 Jesus said: Any one who loves me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home in them.

**19 Wed** 2 Co 9:6-11  
 Paul writes: Any one who sows generously will also reap generously. God loves the one who gives joyfully.

**20 Thu** 1 Co 1:4-9  
 God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

**21 Fri** Mt 9:10-13  
 St MATTHEW  
 Jesus said: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. Indeed, I have come not to call the just, but sinners.

**22 Sat** Is 43:1-4a  
 Thus says God who created you: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are mine.

**23 SUN** Lk 16:1-13  
 Jesus said: No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

**24 Mon** Ezk 34:1-16  
 The Lord says: I will take care of my flock. I shall look for the lost sheep, bring back the strays, bandage the injured and strengthen the sick. I shall watch over the one that is healthy and strong.

**25 Tue** Ps 103  
 Bless the Lord, my soul; let all that is in me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul; forget none of his good deeds.

**26 Wed** Mt 22:34-40  
 Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar: Love your neighbour as yourself.

**27 Thu** 1 K 19:8b-13a  
 Elijah waited for God on Mount Sinai. A great wind arose, but God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Then came a fire, but God was not in the fire. After the fire came a voice of silence, and God spoke to Elijah.

**28 Fri** Jn 14:15-26  
 Before his Passion, Jesus said to his disciples: I shall ask the Father and he will give you another protector, the Holy Spirit, to be with you for ever.

**29 Sat** Rm 8:1-11  
 The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.



**7 SUN** 2 Tm 1:6-18 Paul writes to Timothy: I remind you now to fan into a flame the gift God has placed in you. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of inward strength, of love and of self-control.

**8 Mon** Am 5:4,24 God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

**9 Tue** Is 41:13-10 The Lord says to his people: You are my servants, I have chosen you and will not cast you off. Fear not, for I am with you.

**10 Wed** Mk 2:1-12 Four people came, bringing a paralysed man, and they lowered the mat on which he lay in front of Jesus. Jesus, when he saw their faith, said to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

**11 Thu** Ep 2:13-18 Christ is our peace. He has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between the peoples and reconciled them to God, through the cross.

**12 Fri** Mt 16:13-20 Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" "Some say John the Baptist," they answered, "some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

**13 Sat** 1 Co 4:1-5 Paul writes: Judge nothing prematurely, but wait until the Lord comes.

**14 SUN** Lk 17:11-19 To the Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

**15 Mon** Ps 55:17-19 To God I call and he saves me, evening, morning and at noon. God's peace delivers my soul, for he hears my cry.

**16 Tue** 2 Co 4:5-7 We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord. We are your servants for Jesus' sake.

**17 Wed** Ph 1:1-11 Paul writes: I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.

**18 Thu** Lk 10:1-9 St LUKE Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

**19 Fri** Jn 21:15-17 Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

**20 Sat** 2 Co 3:1-6 Paul writes to the Corinthians: You are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**21 SUN** Lk 18:7-8 Jesus said: Will not God bring about justice for those who cry out to him day and night?

**22 Mon** Is 43:1-4a The Lord says: You are precious in my eyes, I value you and I love you.

**23 Tue** 1 Jn 4:12-21 Let us love, since God loved us first. Anyone who does not love the brother or sister they see cannot love God whom they do not see.

**24 Wed** Dt 30:11-14 God's Word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

**25 Thu** Rm 15:7-13 Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

**26 Fri** 2 Co 1:3-7 Blessed be God who consoles us in all our afflictions. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

**27 Sat** Ga 5:16-18,22-23 Let yourselves be guided by the Spirit and you will not be under the Law. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, trust in others and self-control.

**28 SUN** Lk 18:9-14 In a parable, Jesus said that the one who prayed saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner", went home forgiven.

**29 Mon** Mk 2:13-14 As he was walking along, Jesus saw Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

**30 Tue** Rm 8:18-25 Paul writes: The whole of creation has been groaning as in childbirth up to the present time. And we too groan inwardly as we wait with eagerness for our bodies to be set free.

**31 Wed** Mt 5:38-42 Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.



In Jesus' last meal with his disciples, the Gospel according to Saint John emphasizes the episode of the foot-washing. At that time, it was customary to bring water when guests entered a house so that they could wash their feet. The slaves, who brought them a basin of water and a towel, would sometimes do it for them. On exceptional occasions, a member of the family could perform the act, to honor a special guest.

When Jesus washes the disciples' feet, he upsets the customary order of things. He takes the place of a servant. He honors his disciples. Curiously, he washes their feet "during the meal" when they are already lying on couches, and not when they enter the room. Was this to make up for something forgotten? In any case, doing it then gives the act even more symbolic power. It is a parable in act whose meaning has to be "understood" (v. 7 and 12). Washing feet normally indicates a transition, going from outside the house to inside. Christ's act also indicates a transition—the disciples' entry into a new type of relationship with him and among themselves. Jesus is so insistent in the face of Peter's refusal because communion with him is at stake. "If I do not wash you, you can have no part with me" (v. 8). This participation with Christ involves a twofold transformation. Jesus, the master, becomes a servant. And the disciples are transformed into friends (see also John 15,13-15).

In order to love with Christ, to "do what he has done for us" (v. 15), we need to let his love change us. Christ loves me to the point of serving me and taking my place, and I have to let him take care of all my cares. And then, just as between friends, we will share everything in common. He takes my sin as his own. And his treasure of love becomes mine, so that I can draw from it in order to love to the very end.

- Why does Peter resist so much when Jesus wants to wash his feet?
- What does it mean for me to welcome Christ's love?
- What needs to change in our relationship with one another as Christians? How can we follow Christ's example?

According to theories of vision in ancient times, the eye does not only capture light; it gives forth light as well. That is why Jesus could say, "The lamp of the body is your eye." The eye is literally a lamp that illuminates. That is how they explained why some animals could see in the dark. A healthy eye gives off light. For a diseased eye, everything is darkness and confusion. In the words of Jesus, a healthy eye is literally a "simple" eye: a way of looking that is generous and straightforward. A diseased eye is a "bad" eye, blinded by jealousy or hatred. A Jewish writing that Jesus may have been familiar with said; "A good man does not have a dark eye, for he has compassion for everyone, even sinners."

Jesus' words: "When your eye is healthy, your whole body is in the light, but when it is bad, your body is in darkness, too" can mean that the quality of our life depends on the way we look at things. If you look around with simplicity and goodness, you will be in the light, and you will find your way. If you let jealousy blind you, in the end you will stumble in your own night.

Another translation is possible: "When your eye is healthy, [that shows that] your whole body is in the light, but when it is bad, [that means] your body is in darkness." This second interpretation fits better with the theory that the eye emits a subtle fire that is in the body. The following words confirm this: "So watch out that the light in you is not darkness!" What matters is the light within. If you have night within you, your gaze will be hard and create difficulties. But when your inner life is illuminated and oriented towards love, a look of kindness sheds light around you, even if you are unaware of it.

- Why is our way of looking sometimes troubled and even dark?
- What can heal it, making it more transparent and open?
- What situations around us would need the light of a look of kindness?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

## India

### After the Earthquake

Sophie lives in Ahmedabad, in the State of Gujurat, India. In 1997, she spent three months in Taizé. She recently wrote to us after the earthquake that devastated her region:

Since the fateful day of 26 January, we have been continuously involved in rescue and relief operations in Kutch district. Now we have started with the rehabilitation phase. We are working mainly in the area of providing medical care. Our long-term plans are to develop a community-based health-care system where local people can be trained in primary health care and they in turn can cater to the health needs of the community.

We'll also be helping to run education centres for pre-school age children and also an income-generation programme for women through promotion of Kutchi handicrafts. The conditions in Kutch cannot be described. The entire district has been destroyed. Bhachau Block, where we are working, is the worst, with not a single stone left standing. People have lost everything. Many are still undergoing severe trauma. One has to be really there to see and understand what they are experiencing. What they long for is just for someone to be with them and to listen. Many agencies have come, given relief aid and gone. But a simple gesture of actually sitting down with the people, talking to them and giving a patient ear to their experience of the dreadful day and the after-events is much appreciated. The aftershocks still continue, leaving the

people fear-stricken and psychologically drained. It will take a long time to rebuild their lives and to give them hope that everything can be normal again. The weather conditions make rehabilitation efforts even tougher. The drought and fierce winds in the region only add to the fear and worry.

Often we lead such dry and mundane lives that we forget to be grateful for all the blessings God has showered on us. It is overwhelming to see how the simple people in the villages can be grateful for what they have, even in the most trying conditions. The week before last it rained in Kutch, making life even more miserable, because they are living in plastic-sheet shelters. Yet in the midst of so much misery and hopelessness, when you greet them, so spontaneously

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and happily they reply, "We are fine!" It's truly amazing to hear this from people who have no proper roof over their heads and who have lost everything. I wonder why for us, who have everything in life, at times it's so difficult to say, "Yes, I'm fine." Let alone being joyful! When you go to their homes, they won't let you go without offering tea, even if they may not have enough milk for themselves. Many of the cattle have stopped giving milk because for days after the quake they couldn't get fodder. But this is their hospitality—to share whatever little they have.

They never tire of repeating their experience to anyone who visits them. It was truly a nightmare. The earthquake came with a loud noise and a sandstorm so people could not see each other. At first some thought it was a bomb. Others thought it might be a cyclone since the district had been struck by a bad cyclone a few years back. So many of them rushed inside their homes and were trapped when the buildings fell on them.

But now life goes on, with children running about and playing and enjoying their long vacations. People have already started to celebrate festivals and even marriages, even though they do not yet have proper homes. Each time I go, I am touched afresh by so many things. The village people have taught me so much.

### Practical Solidarity

In collaboration with Taizé, Father P. Rayappa, Regional Youth Director of Andhra Pradesh, and two young people from Andhra went to Gujarat in March, to see what was happening in the devastated areas. The visit has resulted in a practical gesture of support, through Operation Hope, for some of the families who have lost everything in the earthquake.

## Bangladesh

### "Where Love Is, God Is Present"

A group of brothers from Taizé has been living in Bangladesh for the last twenty-five years. During these years, many youth meetings have been organised in different areas and towns of the country. The number of Christians is very limited in this nation of a hundred and thirty million people, but the Christian community is rich in diversity. Almost half come from different tribal groups of Mongolian, Khmer or Dravidian origin. This makes for diversity, but also for tension. There is also a risk that the Christian community would close itself off from the rest of the population, out of fear, or because it is busy with its own joys and sorrows.

Last year, the Taizé brothers organised yet another meeting, with the hope that it would inspire people with the trust that reaches out to others. The theme was "Where there is love, God is present" (Ubi caritas). The meeting was held at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), in Savar, outside Dhaka. There are many handicapped people at the hospital and many among the employees are also handicapped. They are nearly all Muslim and Hindu.

### Among People Who Are Vulnerable

It was felt to be extremely important to have the meeting among these people who are vulnerable and cannot deal with their difficult situations themselves. How much do we realise that in helping, we ourselves are helped? Many people who participated in this meeting started to look on disability in a different manner, after making friends with handicapped persons and helping them move around, listening to them and getting to know their situations. It is in service out of love that God is present.

The meeting, attended by nearly five hundred people of different faiths, was divided into three parts. The first was for Christians only. It consisted of workshops and prayers. At the end of this first day, a good number of Muslims and Hindus started arriving. A Buddhist monk and some students from the biggest monastery in Dhaka had been present from the beginning; now other Buddhists arrived too.

### Living in Peace and Mutual Trust

The whole of the following day was one of reflection and meditation together, also with several different workshops. During the meeting, the Catholic Bishop, the Church of Bangladesh Bishop and a Muslim leader all addressed the young people. How do we live together in peace and mutual trust? The three daily prayers of the previous day became moments of shared silence and singing. As the next day was a Sunday, the Christians went to church in the surrounding parishes, some by walking, making it into a small pilgrimage.

Afterwards, all the participants gathered together for a final reflection in the main hall of the CRP compound. It was fascinating to see the diversity of the crowd. Many had come from North Bengal—Santals, Oraos and Mundas. Others were from the Chittagong Hilltracts, on the border with Burma, or tribals from



North  
West  
East  
South



the northern border with India—Garos and Kashias. There were Bengali Muslims, Christians and Hindus. The diversity of the country was reflected in this gathering. And just as important, there were handicapped and able-bodied people. All this together became a symbol of where our true strength lies, not in isolation and force, but in communion and service.

### AUSTRALIA

One of the brothers will be in Australia in July. For details of his programme, see: <http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgap.htm>

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